

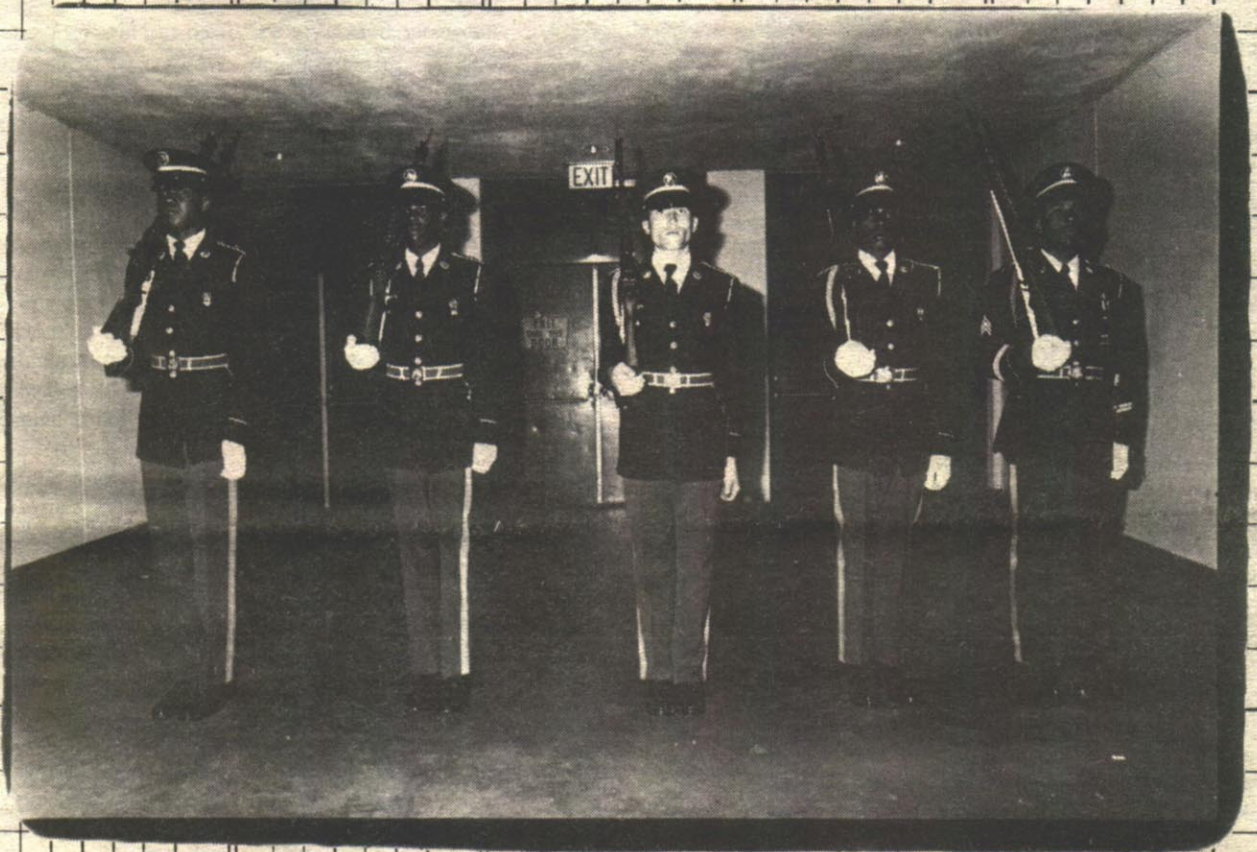
# IN THESE TIMES

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FEB. 15-21, 1984

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## The *Indefensible Budget*

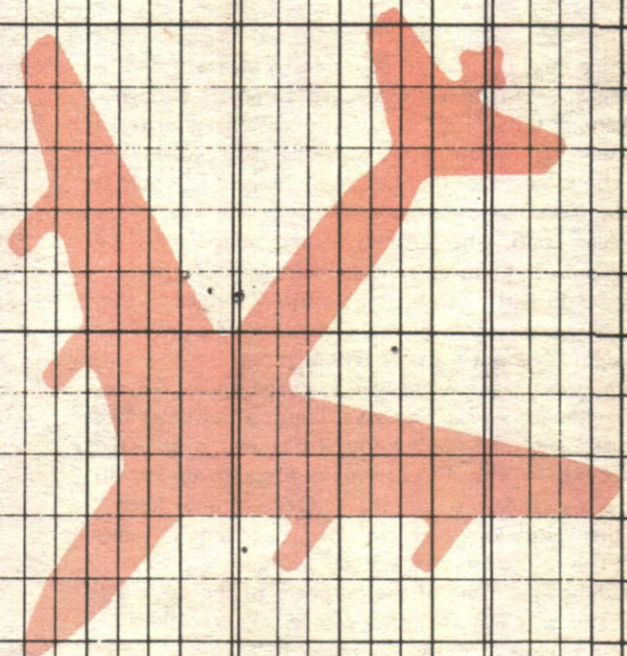


Photograph:  
*Lionel Delevingne*

**John Judis examines  
Reagan's military buildup**



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# Cockburn flap mutes *Voice*

By Richard Ryan

For a number of years Alexander Cockburn, the recently suspended columnist of the *Village Voice*, has written with great style and malice about the mainstream press in this country, and the way its conventions distort the structure and content of the news. Cockburn's conception of journalism—epitomized by his thesis that a good newspaper is "a bundle of opinion and prejudice advertised as such"—treats the traditional demands for journalistic objectivity as mottos of the status quo and ridicules standard-line newspapers as ad agencies for the establishment. In an ongoing critique of his own profession, Cockburn has hunted down instances of plagiarism, boosterism and willful omission through the news media, though nowhere so much as in his *bête noir*, the *New York Times*. His opponents have responded by labelling his work shameless and gutter journalism—a criticism the writer wears like a declaration of honor.

Because idealists can always have their own high standards turned against them, the controversy now surrounding Cockburn has taken on the cerebral and aggressively personal tone that marks his own writing. That controversy, in turn, constitutes either a minor incident that will be forgotten in a few months, or a significant moment in the history of the American left intelligentsia.

These are the facts: in August of 1982, two months after the Israeli armies advanced into Lebanon, Cockburn received a \$10,000 research grant from the Institute for Arab Studies (IAS) for a proposed book on the invasion, which was still in progress. Cockburn never found time to write the book; in the meantime, the IAS closed due to financial difficulties, and Cockburn made plans to return the advance.

Yet the circle of events continued to widen. Last year the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) published *Pro-Arab Propaganda in America*, a booklet critics characterize as a Zionist hit-list. Among the groups accused of distributing propaganda was the IAS. Then, in early January, reporter Alan Lupo wrote a lengthy article for the *Boston Phoenix* in which he exposed the grant to Cockburn and cited the accusations of the ADL and AIPAC (a pro-Israeli lobbying group) against the IAS. He also noted that Cockburn had informed neither his editor nor his readers of the advance.

The story was immediately picked up by the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. David Schneiderman, the *Voice*'s editor, told the *Post* that the situation "was a terrible, terrible problem" and that what Cockburn did was "very bad." Cockburn, who was vacationing in Florida, returned to New York to find he had been suspended from his job. In the January 24 issue of the *Voice*, Schneiderman ran an editorial in which he complained that Cockburn, by failing to disclose his finances, had violated the implicit trust between a newspaper and its readership. Cockburn was allowed to write a last column defending himself, the IAS and the freedom of journalists to associate with whomever they choose.

Unconvinced by the editor's appeal to professional ethics, Cockburn's supporters theorized that the columnist was the victim of anti-Arab tendencies in the press. Many speculated that Schneiderman, who came to the *Voice* from the *Times* (one of



Alexander Cockburn: sacrificed to New York establishment

Schneiderman's discipline unwarranted. "There's something unclear about David's position," says Navasky. "If he accepts that the IAS was a legitimate research group, and that Alex's opinions were unaffected by the grant, then the punishment seems unduly harsh."

Was Schneiderman's seemingly disproportionate action a revelation of his own political sympathies? On this question, Edward Said, chairman of the now-defunct Institute for Arab Studies, has no doubts. He points to Schneiderman's statement that "Arab does not always equal Palestinian, which does not always equal terrorist" as an example of the anti-Arab mentality at work. He asks, "Would anyone ever write 'Being an American does not always equal being a Jew, which does not always equal being a Shylock' to prove they're not anti-Semitic?" He is equally indignant over Schneiderman's characterization of the *Institute* as "clearly" political. "We were extraordinarily unpolitical," insists Said, a professor of English at Columbia University. He asserts that in conversations with Schneiderman prior to Cockburn's suspension, the editor assured him that the independent status of the IAS was not at issue.

Even if one accepts the rather nebulous case against Cockburn (and he has himself expressed regret over the matter, if only for giving his enemies "cause for rejoicing"), Schneiderman's position seems on its face contradictory. In his editorial, he argues "the receipt of money...compromises the integrity of any journalist in the eyes of the reader." Yet Schneiderman took action against one of the paper's most popular writers without trying to determine if the readers themselves assented to this proposition. Many were insulted by his implication that, although Cockburn's views of the Mideast were well-known long before his encounter with the IAS, the "appearance of conflict" was enough to dupe the vulnerably naive reading public. With letters to the *Voice* running overwhelmingly in Cockburn's favor, Schneiderman seems to have damaged the very thing he intended to protect: the *Voice*'s credibility.

Schneiderman is now refusing to discuss the situation with reporters, and the *Voice* staff is clearly uncomfortable with the uncertainty over Cockburn's fate. A petition has circulated, signed by many of the writers, asking the editor to lift the suspension as soon as possible. Says Hentoff, "We miss him already. He's genuinely charming—a pleasure to work with." Whether Cockburn feels as warmly about the *Voice* is uncertain. Many of his friends say they would be surprised to see him return to the paper.

The ramifications of the affair for the left also remain unclear. Though most members of the news community downplay the event's significance, Cockburn's supporters describe the disruption of his career as a serious blow to independent journalism. When the American left is as dispersed and disorganized as it is now, they argue, intellectuals and even reporters can become the most visible of its representatives. Says Noam Chomsky, "The left in this country is made up of millions of very diverse people and groups that are concerned largely with local causes and individual issues. It's rare that someone speaks to them as a whole as powerfully as Alex." He terms the *Phoenix* article and its subsequent fall-out as "cheap and vulgar slander," meant to silence "one of the few courageous journalists in America."

For Cockburn, the issue begins at home—specifically with his newspaper's neglect of its own readers. He calls the support of the readers "uplifting, though it doesn't pay the rent." And while suggesting that the *Voice*'s most extensive constituency is "the group that buys the newspaper for the movie listings and the apartment ads," he also mentions a more politically aware audience, who wouldn't care if he got "\$10,000 in gold a week from the Vatican," and simply felt he'd been "treated unfairly."

If this clamor has amounted to a debate of any importance, it would seem that the *Voice* won points on newsroom etiquette, while Cockburn made off with the hearts and minds of the readers. About them he says, "The strength of their reaction was obviously heartening to me because it suggests that the constituencies that matter to me are out there in some numbers."

Richard Ryan is a freelance writer living in Austin, Texas.

## THE STORY

Cockburn's favorite targets), had acted more to please friends in the journalism community than *Voice* readers. Bizarrely enough, the *Wall Street Journal*, for which Cockburn occasionally writes, ran a widely quoted editorial defending his activities as "relatively innocuous." At the same time, the *Nation* announced it would be running fortnightly pieces by the columnist.

According to Alan Lupo, who strongly denied being "fed" the story by Jewish groups (his source remains unidentified), the issue has nothing to do with the Mideast or the dynamics of the news profession. "There's nothing wrong with the IAS giving money for research. Maybe it's a propaganda group, maybe it isn't...the Anti-Defamation League is engaged in propaganda. To me propaganda is a legitimate word," he says. Lupo, a self-described "moderate Zionist," adds, "I don't know if I believe in objectivity any more than Cockburn. But if I get money for a group for my work, I owe it to my readers to tell them. Once. Somewhere."

Nat Hentoff, the *Voice*'s long-time civil liberties columnist, echoes this argument. "[The failure to disclose] was a dumb thing to do. It hurt him; it hurt the paper. One of the purposes of the *Voice* is to unveil hypocrisy. The only way the *Voice* can remain credible is to acknowledge when it makes a mistake," Hentoff says.

Other journalists do not find the issue so well-defined. Victor Navasky, Cockburn's new editor at the *Nation*, says that though the columnist's actions were, in his judgment, improper, he also found

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# IN THESE TIMES

By David Moberg

DES MOINES

**D**EMOCRATIC PARTY ESTABLISHMENT figures did nearly all they could to prevent the long-shot outsider from having a chance at the nomination this year. But Iowa's February 20 caucuses and the February 28 New Hampshire primary still provide brief opportunities for the dark horses in "the battle of perceptions." It will also be a test of organizational mettle, with the relatively united labor movement facing close scrutiny of its effectiveness.

No one doubts that former Vice-President Walter Mondale will win by a substantial margin in Iowa, but all his opponents are hoping that the expectation will be high enough that Mondale could fall short and thus be seen as "losing" even as he wins. Sen. John Glenn will be fighting hard even to hold his claim on second place and will be looking to more conservative Democrats in New Hampshire to save his image.

Officially, Sen. Alan Cranston wants to emerge as the clear winner of the "second tier," but his organizers hope that his strong organization, support from dedicated peace groups and a moderate turnout will push him into second place. Both Sen. Gary Hart and former Sen. George McGovern feel they must come in fourth to keep their campaigns alive.

The others are even more also-rans. Rev. Jesse Jackson has made few appearances in Iowa and has no real organization here. Former Gov. Reuben Askew has recruited some of the anti-abortion forces, but since he is not for total abolition of abortion, he stirs little enthusiasm among the hard core. Sen. Ernest Hollings has made a few forays into the state but has no organization and virtually no support.

Mondale opponents say that anything less than a 50-60 percent victory would demonstrate weakness in a state that neighbors his home, where he has long-standing ties and where a well-financed campaign backed by a greater than usual labor effort give him impressive advantages. But Joe Trippi, the new state campaign manager, cautions that as many as 30 percent of Democrats are uncommitted and independents could swing the open caucus meetings toward other candidates.

"Our problem isn't the candidate, the job he's doing or the campaign," he insisted. "Our problem is making sure our folks get there [to the caucus meetings]. There's this idea among our supporters that we've got it sewed up."

So each weekend the campaign brings 250 or more volunteers down from Minnesota for a "Fritz Blitz" door-to-door canvass, asks supporters to write personal letters to voters who tell telephone callers they are undecided and maintains a statewide network of 60 paid coordinators (out of a staff of 80, second only to Cranston's in size). Self-labeled "hogs" ("because we want it all," one coordinator explained), the coordinators complement a similar structure organized by the Iowa Federation of Labor and various individual unions.

The campaign stresses "pragmatism" in its bid for the wavering. "This is no time to make a statement," Trippi said. "You can make a statement or you can beat Reagan. Alan Cranston and George McGovern are fine men, but there's nothing today that shows they could beat Reagan."

Glenn's campaign organization has been troubled, but Trippi maintains that "it's not the organization, it's him" that is the problem. "People think there's something exciting about him because he's an astronaut. Then they find there isn't, and they turn to someone else—usually us."

Glenn's Iowa press secretary, Larry Rasky, acknowledges that the astronaut

image, which is the main reason Glenn is a major contender, is also a source of weakness. "The problem so far is that he's not been running against Mondale, Cranston and others but against John Glenn, American hero. Our polling shows people really draw a blank on what John Glenn has done for the last 20 years."

TV ads consequently show a brief biography—Marine, astronaut, businessman, senator, a mushroom cloud shrinking (with reference to his work against nuclear proliferation), magnet schools (more support for education is one of Glenn's safe cure-alls) and an encounter with a distraught woman in which Glenn assures her he'll work for peace. Rasky says that the campaign wants to combat the Mondale-created image of Glenn as not a "real Democrat," but at the same time it is working to recruit more conservative Democrats and independents who are not regular caucus participants.

Their targets are blue-collar workers ("We think the voting profile of blue-collar workers is closer to someone who would vote for John Glenn than someone who would vote for Walter Mondale"), "middle Americans," "shot-guns and pick-ups" and "agribusiness." But Rasky acknowledged that "it's the curse of the moderate candidate that you don't get enthusiastic volunteers." Supporters like Rasky had hoped Glenn would "repatriate"—make more patriotic—the Democratic Party, but Glenn's usual stump speech, in which he declaims at length on the meaning of the pledge of allegiance, doesn't succeed in stirring the juices and obscuring clear

to reach people who are not regular Democratic Party participants. Hart, who talks about the need for new ideas but so far has not made any of his own issues in the campaign (and often does not even indicate what they are), competes with Cranston and McGovern for the peace vote, which is very important in the caucuses in this state.

But Hart wants to occupy a more centrist position than his old friend, McGovern, whose 1972 campaign he managed. Glaser admits that even after more than a year of campaigning in Iowa, Hart is unknown to many voters. Although Hart has a record that could appeal to many liberal and centrist voters, his technocratic "neo-liberalism" has little emotional fire.

His "new ideas" for the economy rely heavily on market forces, but use government policies to encourage new technologies and job retraining. Although he would cut many weapons programs that he believes are wasteful and ineffective, he still favors a real increase in military spending and modernization of strategic weapons that some disarmament advocates criticize. Although like all of the candidates he can claim a few local labor officials who support him, his appeals for labor-management cooperation, vocal opposition to auto domestic content legislation and overall orientation does not have strong blue-collar appeal. Yet Hart, like McGovern, does compete well with the front-runners for the small but important farm vote.

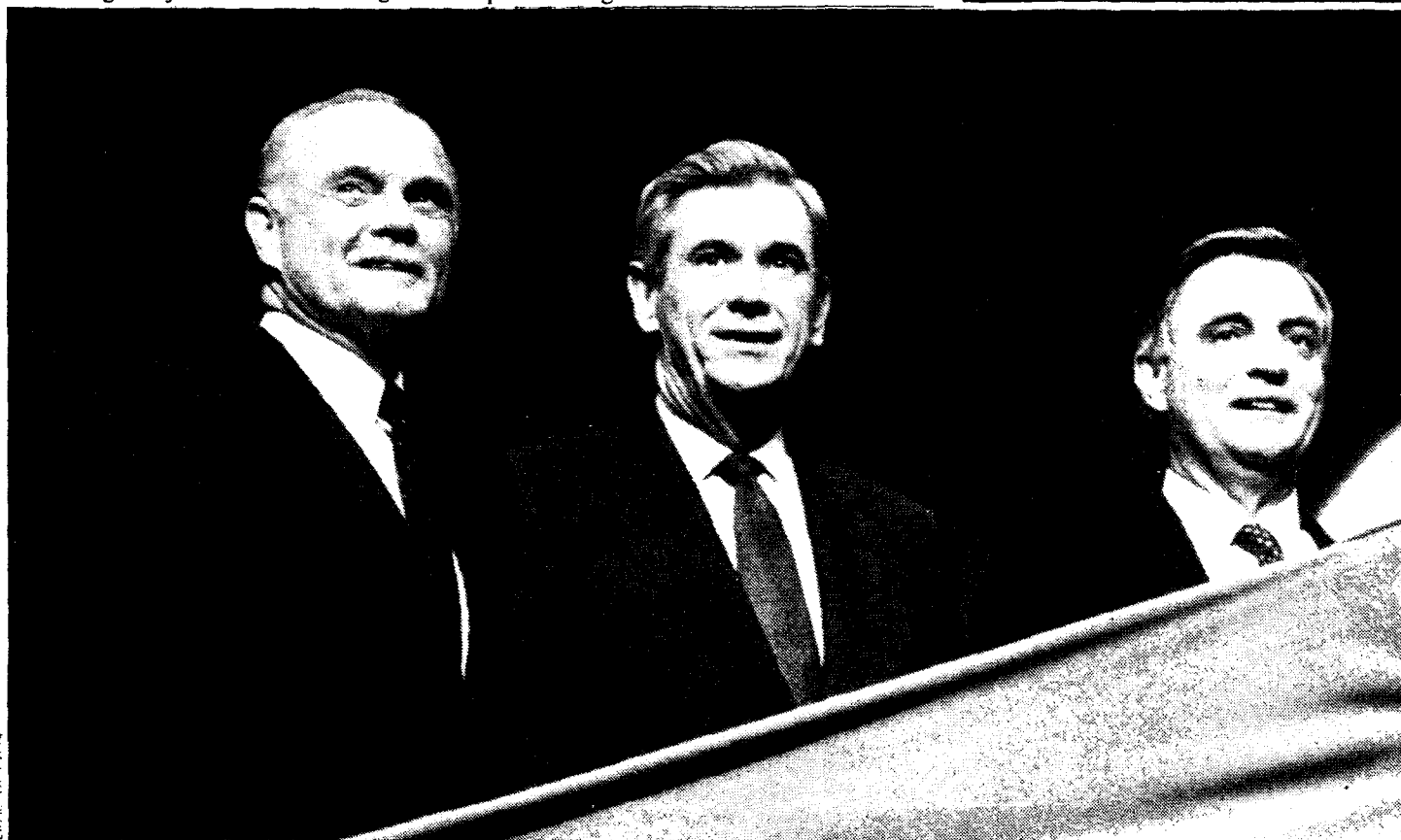
Nearly everyone acknowledges that Cranston's organization of 127 full-time paid staff gives him a chance to make a

who want to make more than a statement and have a shot at winning will be with us. Cranston has a political case. McGovern has no political case."

Cranston's case—which Law admits "is less than golden"—is that the Democrats must deny the West to Reagan to have a chance at winning, and Cranston, who outpolled Carter and Reagan when he was running for Senate in 1980, is the only Democrat who could win California. McGovern, on the other hand, has high negative ratings among as many as half of Iowa voters, Law maintains.

David Fogarty, Cranston field coordinator in northeast Iowa, sees the peace and environmentalist voters as the core of Cranston's constituency. The campaign tries to turn doubts about his age into an asset by stressing experience and argues that eventually Cranston would get labor support if he won the nomination. But Fogarty admits that in Dubuque, a strong labor town, union members are now strongly for Mondale. But Betty Koch, shop chair of her UAW local at a toy factory in Dyersville, Iowa, backs Cranston

## Alan Cranston wants to emerge as the clear winner of the "second tier."



Democratic contenders Glenn, Askew and Mondale

# In Iowa, the issue is: how much will Mondale win by?

thought the way Reagan's flag-waving does.

"I just don't see the numbers here for us," Rasky conceded, but he hopes to finish second and "show steady growth." They console themselves that Mondale is still working hard. "I'm amazed at Mondale spending as much effort, resources and time as he is," field director Sam Vitali said. "I think the reason is he sees what we see: it's not solid for anybody."

Hart's coordinator, Keith Glaser, thinks that his candidate is finally picking up support after a long effort of playing the back roads and attempting

strong showing in Iowa. (Some competitors complain that Cranston and Mondale will both overspend their limits.) Cranston was endorsed by STAR-PAC, a major peace group, and has other freeze supporters behind him. But clearly his staff is worried about McGovern's new appeal to that constituency.

"On the left fringe we've got people who are undecided between us and McGovern," Iowa coordinator John Law said with a touch of impatience in his voice. "McGovern wins the ones who are ideologically pure. We win the ones with any practical instinct—those

"because I feel he's a more progressive liberal than Mondale is. Mondale is stuck in the middle that's nice, calm and quiet. With the climate in this country, it's time for a person to speak out and say some things that aren't necessarily popular."

McGovern appeals to that sentiment, not only among the "left fringe" but among farmers and part of labor (see *In These Times*, Feb. 1 for a profile of his campaign). Campaign coordinator Judy Wilson says that many people are drawn to McGovern "almost like they wanted to make amends for what happened to him in 1972." Despite the late start, McGovern's support has grown among what Wilson claims is a varied constituency. The staff is small and mostly volunteer. There are the old negative images of McGovern to overcome plus the sense that a McGovern victory is a long shot.

Also, although McGovern has many programs to address labor concerns (his proposal for rebuilding the railroads won

*Continued on page 7*



# INSHORT

## Domesticity

What Reagan calls a "modest retrenchment" in domestic spending—\$9.2 billion in domestic cuts for fiscal year 1984, 40 percent of that coming from programs targeted for low-income people—puts certain groups and programs under the knife:

- This year's funding for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) will run out in early spring, yet for FY '85 the administration is asking for \$217 million less than this year's outlay. National Organization for Women (NOW) estimates that half of the women eligible for the nutrition assistance aren't even on the 1984 WIC roles, and an additional 500,000 will be dropped when the money runs out this year.

- NOW also estimates that every time the Pentagon's budget goes up \$1 billion, 9,500 jobs for women disappear in the transfer from civilian to military production. The 13 percent suggested increase in the military budget looks less "modest" when seen as part of the continuing spiral of arms funding: when Reagan took office, the U.S. spent \$18 million an hour, presently that figure is \$27 million an hour and climbing rapidly.

- VISTA, the only full-time government anti-poverty program for volunteers, is slated by the White House to receive \$5.8 million despite the House's attempt to revitalize the program last year with a \$25 million "funding floor."

A fusillade of opposition has already erupted over the new budget. NOW's Judy Goldsmith has noted the increasing feminization of poverty and says that Reagan must be conceding the women's vote without a fight. A 91-member Coalition on Block Grants and Human Needs, the Interfaith Action for Economic Justice and the Friends of VISTA are busily lobbying Congress to reject the proposed cuts. WIC is being supported by most groups and even has an inadvertent ally: when Sen. Jesse Helms asked the General Accounting Office (GAO) to determine whether the milk and cheese program really was beneficial for mothers and their babies, he was told flatly that it was. According to six health studies summarized by the GAO: "The proportion of infants who are at risk at birth because of low birth weight decreased as much as 20 percent [after the WIC program]."

## Numbers don't lie

With the "frontwork" done by the Kissinger Report and Secretary of State George Shultz's pronouncement that El Salvador has made "considerable progress" in curbing right-wing death squads, Reagan's recent request to triple military aid to that country was no surprise. Even though the aid no longer legally hinges on human rights improvements, Americas Watch likes to keep the record straight with vigilant reporting. In the last six months of 1983, the number of civilian murders by government forces has actually increased from the first of the year (2,527 to 2,615). The independent human rights agency gets its numbers from the *Tutela Legal*, the Salvadoran archdiocesan human rights office, which compiles its statistics by talking to relatives or other first-hand witnesses. Shultz apparently got his figures from the U.S. embassy, which culls its statistics from reports in the local state-controlled press. One fact that Shultz did get right—that disappearances have decreased slightly—is minimized by a sharp increase in political prisoners in El Salvador last year (from 200 to 491).

## Robbing Peter to rob Paul

And while Americas Watch is dirtying up the administration's laundered human rights records, 19 Massachusetts AFL-CIO unions are trying to distance themselves from Lane Kirkland's endorsement of the Kissinger Report and the administration's subsequent aid proposal. The unions base their opposition to an increase in military aid and their "dismay at Brother Kirkland" on their 1983 national convention's resolution to tie aid to the end of death squads, progress in union rights and land reform. Ed Clark of the ACTWU says that unions across the country will be reminded that El Salvador is a trade union issue because of the unionists killed there (more than a thousand people in the last year) and the economic policies that make the country into a sweatshop for the U.S. "The North American working class is not represented by our policy there—last year the Manhattan Shirt Company closed up shop here and moved to San Salvador where they pay workers 25 cents an hour to work in subhuman conditions."

With the House vote last week favoring human rights "conditionality," and (as *In These Times* went to press) the question put once again before the Senate, Reagan may have to confront the sticky rights issue one more time.

## "God Bless America"?

With Reagan promising in his pumping-for-re-election speech to "see if we can't find room in our schools for God," perhaps the jazz great Sarah Vaughan has found a harmonious solution. She intends to record "an English language version" of Pope John Paul's poetry later this year. The administration should begin to work on distribution—public schools are sure to holler for more.

—Beth Maschinot

## Bosses need not comply

WASHINGTON—Union-busting efforts by businesses and the rapidly proliferating band of anti-union consultants has been on the rise in recent years, but the Department of Labor has drastically cut back enforcement of legal requirements for reporting such activity under the Reagan administration, according to a staff study of the House Subcommittee on Labor-Management Relations released last week.

Under the 1959 Landrum-Griffin Act employers and any consultant directly or indirectly involved in trying to persuade employees about organizing or collective bargaining have to report their actions and expenditures fully and promptly. The same law demands even more extensive disclosure by unions. The requirements on managers and consultants weren't vigorously enforced in the first 20 years, but after hearings in 1979 and 1980 on consultant abuses, enforcement was stepped up.

Then under the Reagan administration the budget for guaranteeing management compliance with the law took a nose-dive—from \$305,788 in 1980 to \$21,638 in 1983. The number of reports filed and investigations initiated also dropped sharply. At the same time, the requirements for unions—always more comprehensive—were enforced much more vigorously. For example, a random audit of unions initiated in 1980 had a budget in its first year of \$39,396 and an estimated 1984 budget of \$972,808.

Labor department procedures and interpretations of the law also undermined enforcement of the law on union-busters. Instead of seeking information that might give a clue of management or consultant failures to report, labor officials now will act only on an official complaint. The department even dropped about 100 cases, many of which already were shown to involve violations, because they had not been initiated by a complaint. Witnesses scheduled to appear before the committee also report that the Department of Labor often does not respond to complaints. One survey of National Labor Relations Board cases in California over a seven-year period showed that less than 1 percent of employers and consultants who should have reported actually did so. But the Labor Department now will not even cross-check with those records.

Enforcement has also been narrowed by limiting what is judged to be covered by the law, dropping any reporting requirements for indirect consultant influence (such as behind-the-scenes management of an anti-union campaign), and no longer requiring companies to report separately anti-union persuasion done by supervisors or others who had some other regular job.

"The inescapable conclusion of our preliminary examination is that while some 70,000 unions dutifully register every year with the Department of Labor con-

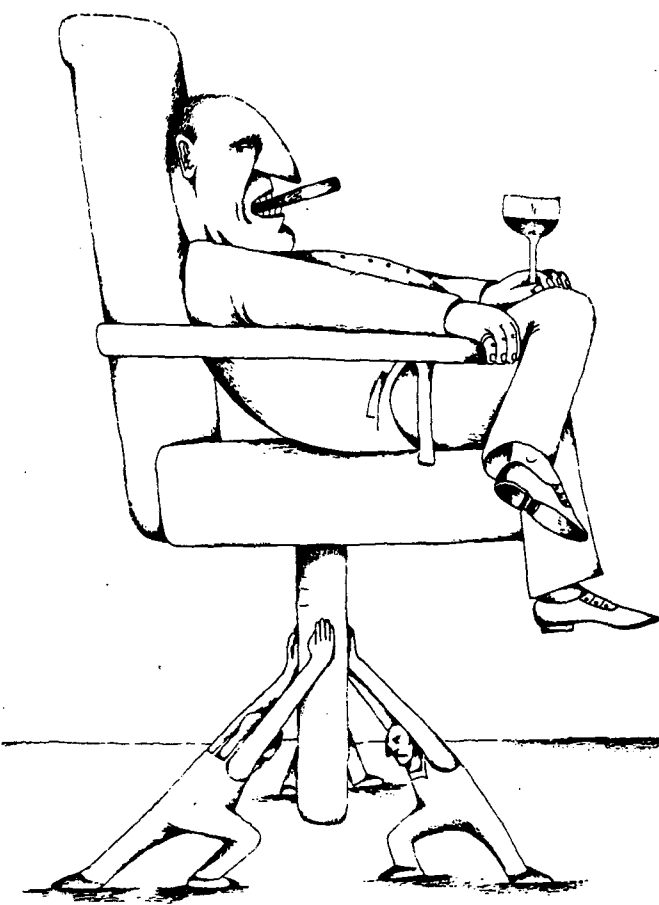
cerning their activities and finances, there is almost a total lack of compliance by employers and consultants," the committee staff reported. "In spite of this apparent lopsidedness in compliance, the department has systematically dismantled its employer and consultant reporting enforcement program. The Department of Labor is outright failing to enforce important provisions of the law."

Anti-union consultants regularly use the material that unions disclose in their reports in their campaigns, for example, showing how much a union organizer gets paid in an attempt to dis-

credit him or her. Fred Feinstein, counsel to the subcommittee, said that union organizers can also use such reported information in their organizing campaigns, telling workers how much their boss is spending to keep out a union, for example. But the information often isn't available, and at times unions are not even aware of the presence of such consultants.

Also, full disclosure would help accomplish what the Landrum-Griffin Act intended—easier discovery of illegal activities of both management and their union-busting consultants.

—David Moberg



M. K. Zacharyowich

## Women pose peace plans

NEW YORK—Belying the pronouncements that the European peace movement is splintered and dying, on February 1 a dozen women peace activists came to New York to see Soviet Deputy UN Ambassador Shustov and their own European UN ambassadors, following a meeting in Washington with chief U.S. arms negotiator Paul Nitze and members of Congress.

The 12 women—including British actress Julie Christie, a member of the German Bundestag, a Belgian theologian, a member of Holland's parliament and the chair of the international peace camp in Comiso, Italy, Francesca Piatti—crossed the Atlantic to protest the deployment of Euromissiles.

Besides bringing reports of European fear and outrage at being used as a military staging area for both the U.S. and the USSR, the women also put forth three proposals:

- that the U.S. government make a bold moratorium initiative, similar to John Kennedy's 1963 proposal for a moratorium on above-ground testing, which was signed by the Russians within 15 days;

- that, as a gesture of peace, the U.S. withdraw the Pershing II and Cruise missiles from Britain, Italy and West Germany and

halt any further deployment;

- that future arms talks not be just between the U.S. and USSR, but include the countries they represented and East Germany and Czechoslovakia as well.

The group also planned to draw up a list of proposals for Soviet Ambassador Shustov.

Back home, referenda in Germany and Italy are in the works to bring the force of public opinion about the missiles to the ballot box. A human chain linking peace activists in Belgium and Holland is scheduled, and Dutch member of parliament Dr. Frouwka Laning hopes her nation's parliament—yet to vote on deploying the Euromissiles—would "vote no, to be a crowbar between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, not as a concession to the other side, but as a concession to world opinion."

Italy's Piatti is also inviting people (for a mere \$30) to buy a square meter of land around the NATO missile site in Comiso where the Cruise missiles will be based. According to Piatti, NATO usually expropriates 500 meters of land around military installations. When the women in Italy's peace movement first got wind of NATO's plans, they bought up the land around the base in Comiso and began selling shares. Should NATO begin expropriation proceedings, expected this spring, all bondholders will be notified and asked to join a court case to block the expropriation.

—Rochelle Lefkowitz



By Barbara Schuler

## CHICAGO

**T**HE DEBATE OVER WHO WILL absorb nuclear plant costs that were vastly underestimated in the days of electricity's 7 percent annual growth is now a hot issue in the Midwest.

In Illinois, Commonwealth Edison's Byron facility, denied an operating license on Jan. 13, may now be subjected to an audit as part of its rate case currently underway in Chicago. And in Ohio and Indiana, consumer advocates are grappling with the consequences of recently cancelled nuclear plants, while in Michigan, a consumers' lobby has proposed legislation prohibiting the inclusion of abandoned plants and imprudent excesses in utility rate bases.

In the '60s and '70s, the nuclear industry's more pragmatic critics cited management carelessness and downright incompetence as a major barrier to the safe operation of nuclear reactors. Investigators of the 1979 accident at Three Mile Island concurred with this criticism, granting legitimacy to a complaint that had long been dismissed by industry and government as a problem only in isolated instances. In its report, President Jimmy Carter's Kemeny Commission stated: "Our investigation has revealed problems with the 'system' that manufactures, operates and regulates nuclear power plants. ...Wherever we looked, we found problems with the human beings who operate the plant [and] with the management that runs the key organization...."

These same complaints have recently become the refrain in disputes between consumers and utility companies over who will be held financially responsible for the enormous cost overruns plaguing nearly all of the nation's 48 nuclear power plants currently under construction.

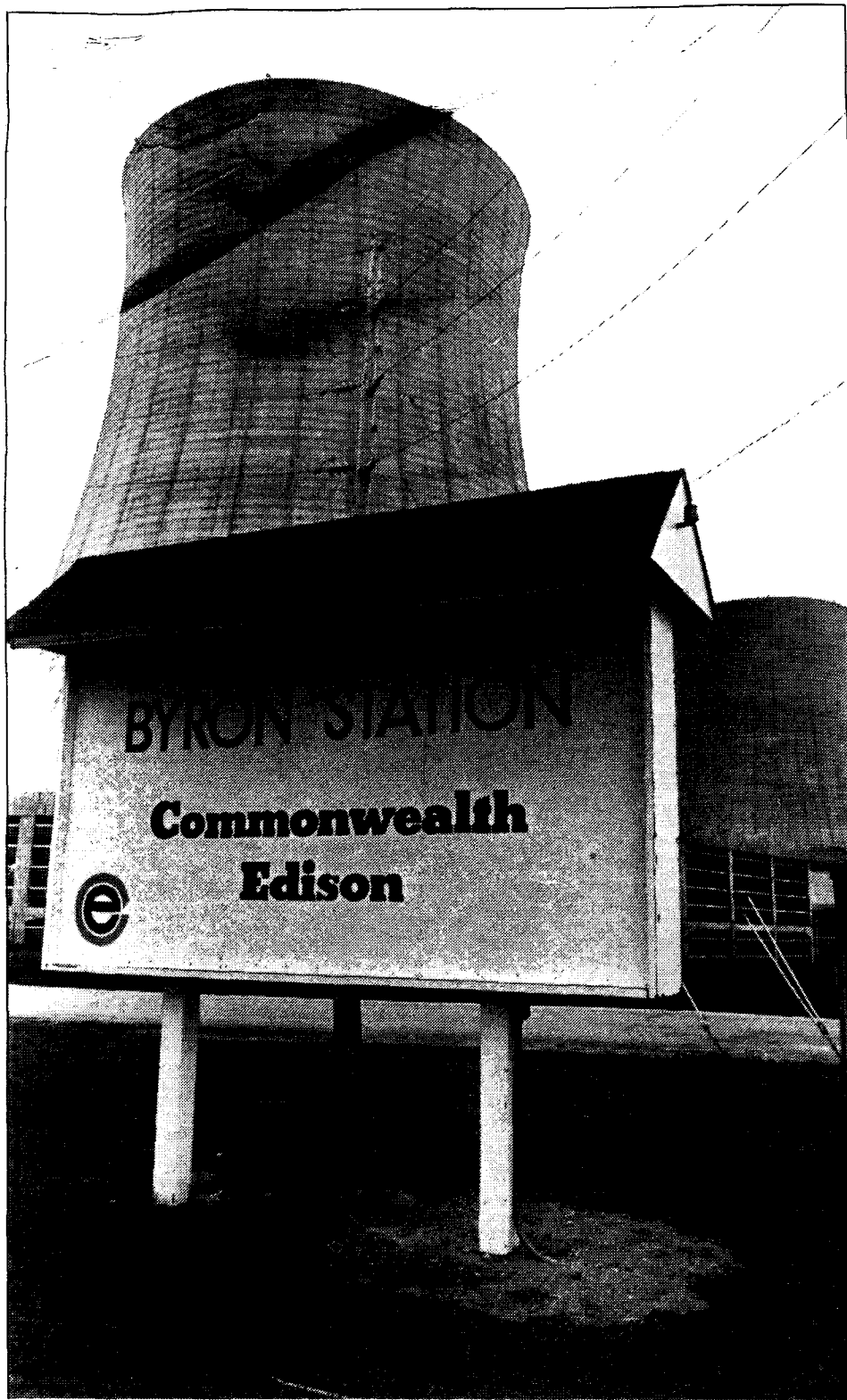
In an effort to establish poor management as a substantial factor behind recent rate increase requests, Business and Professional People in the Public Interest (BPI), intervenors in the Commonwealth Edison rate case, demanded on January 24 an independent management audit of the company's nearly completed Byron Nuclear Power Station. Once estimated at \$731.5 million, the plant is expected to cost more than \$3.7 billion when it finally starts up.

The audit request was BPI's response to part two of Edison's two-tiered rate request proposal that totalled \$964.3 million. The amount of that sum slated to cover costs at Byron's No. 1 reactor—\$502 million—has been removed from consideration in the rate case until the ruling on Com Ed's license appeal is delivered.

An audit of the Byron plant, which would take between six and nine months and cost Com Ed \$600,000, would help determine whether the rate hikes are "just and reasonable" as required by Illinois law, according to BPI legal counsel Doug Cassel. An Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) hearing examiner has received written briefs from both BPI and Edison and is scheduled to rule on the audit by late February.

Having twice before ordered utility company audits, the ICC was once overruled. But the case of Central Illinois Lighting Company (CILCO), which won its appeal in a Sangamon County court, "carries very little precedential weight," said Cassel, "because it only went before a single judge." Had the decision proceeded to an appellate court or state supreme court, that case would have to be considered, he explained.

In Ohio, Democratic Gov. Richard Celeste requested a six-week audit of the William H. Zimmer Nuclear Power Station, now underway, in order to determine what portion of that plant's cost overruns were the fault of mismanagement by its owner companies—Cincinnati Gas & Electric (CG&E), Dayton Power & Light (DP&L) and Columbus and Southern Ohio Electric (C&SOE/AEP). CG&E President William Dickhoner announced on January 21 that the plant, which is 97 percent completed, will convert to coal.



## NUCLEAR POWER

# Consumers rally to fight utilities

The Ohio Consumers' Counsel, the group that urged Gov. Celeste to order the audit, has investigated alternatives to conversion and, according to spokesman Steve Ostrander, the least costly option for consumers is outright cancellation.

While DP&L contends that conversion could be completed for \$350 million in 28 months, energy economist Charles Komanoff estimates that the non-nuclear cost of conversion will run between \$1-2 billion, an amount substantially higher than the DP&L estimate. But Komanoff does not consider that figure the crucial determinant of the project's feasibility.

"The real issue," he says, "is what to do about the \$1.7 billion in borrowed dollars already spent on the project and now accruing interest." Servicing Zimmer's debts between now and the day it actually begins to produce electricity will cost between \$500 million and \$1 billion, and Komanoff concludes that "if any of the \$2.2-2.7 billion representing the nuclear portion of that plant gets passed on to coal ratepayers, the plant then becomes uneconomical."

The Marble Hill Nuclear Power Station, 115 miles down the Ohio river from Zimmer, was abandoned by its majority owner, the Public Service Company of Indiana (PSI), on January 16, but now there is talk of that plant also converting to coal.

Despite Chairman Hugh Barker's announcement that PSI will withdraw from the project, "the cancellation is still contingent on what our partner, Wabash Valley Power Association, intends to do,"

said PSI spokeswoman Jerri Terhune.

Wabash Valley, which owns 17 percent of the Marble Hill plant, has launched studies to determine the feasibility of conversion of one or both of the reactors and a decision is expected from its board of directors by late April. But before Wabash Valley can seriously consider shouldering the burden of converting even one unit, it must conclude negotiations with the Regional Electrification Association (REA)—its "banker"—regarding the refinancing of \$466 million in loan funds, said spokesman Craig Palmer. If REA plays tough, Wabash Valley may have to file with the Public Service Commission for as much as a 40 percent rate increase, Palmer added.

The possibility of salvaging Marble Hill through conversion may be behind a move by PSI, regarded as "unusual" by many observers, to renew its borrowing privileges. At rate hearings, which were scheduled to begin February 14, PSI will seek authorization from the Indiana Public Services Commission to borrow an additional \$500 million in bonds and bank debts, as well as to urge that agency to okay a 14 percent, \$105 million emergency rate increase to rescue them from bankruptcy. Janelle Cousino, director of the Indiana Citizen's Action Coalition, one of the intervenors in the rate case, said that it is critical to determine why the utility has asked to borrow so large a sum when construction at the plant has been cancelled.

The cancellation of Marble Hill, whose estimated costs rose from \$1.4 billion to

more than \$7 billion, with completion set for 1990, was prompted in part by a task force summary issued in December by Republican Gov. Robert Orr's office, recommending the move. The full report, issued last week, urged that Marble Hill be liquidated over a 20-year period, with ratepayers covering only the amount the stockholders cannot handle. The panel suggests a 3 percent rate increase over a five-year period, which, Cousino notes, would "top out at 15 percent. So in asking for the 14 percent emergency increase right at the get-go, PSI is asking for what the governor's panel recommends overall," she says.

Also included in the report are the findings of panel consultants from Salomon Brothers and Arthur D. Little, who claim that the power shortage predicted by utility officials as the result of Marble Hill's shutdown would not be a reality until after the year 2000.

At issue in many cases of ailing nuclear plants is the appeal for a bail-out in the interest of meeting a future demand for electricity. Frequently overestimated in industry calculations, electricity consumption, which grew at a rate of 7 percent annually in the decade prior to the 1973 oil embargo, dropped to 0 percent in 1974 and has averaged 3 percent in the period from 1973-80.

Komanoff asserts that growth is often overestimated because of "a blind spot" in industry's vision. Industrial forecasts "look only at the first factor determining demand—the rate of growth of the economy, or GNP—but there are two other factors that are equally important: changes in electricity prices and changes in prices of competing fuels," he said. A reading of the situation, which bears in mind flat oil and gas prices and the escalating costs of electricity, points to minimal electricity growth over the next decade.

Similar calculations cited by Joe Tuchinsky, director of the Michigan Citizen's Lobby, indicate that new facilities being constructed by both of that state's major utility companies—Consumers Power of Michigan and Detroit Edison—are "unnecessary and excessive." Of those projects, which include Edison's Fermi 2 and a double coal plant called Bell River, CPM's two Midland reactors are clearly the most vulnerable to cancellation.

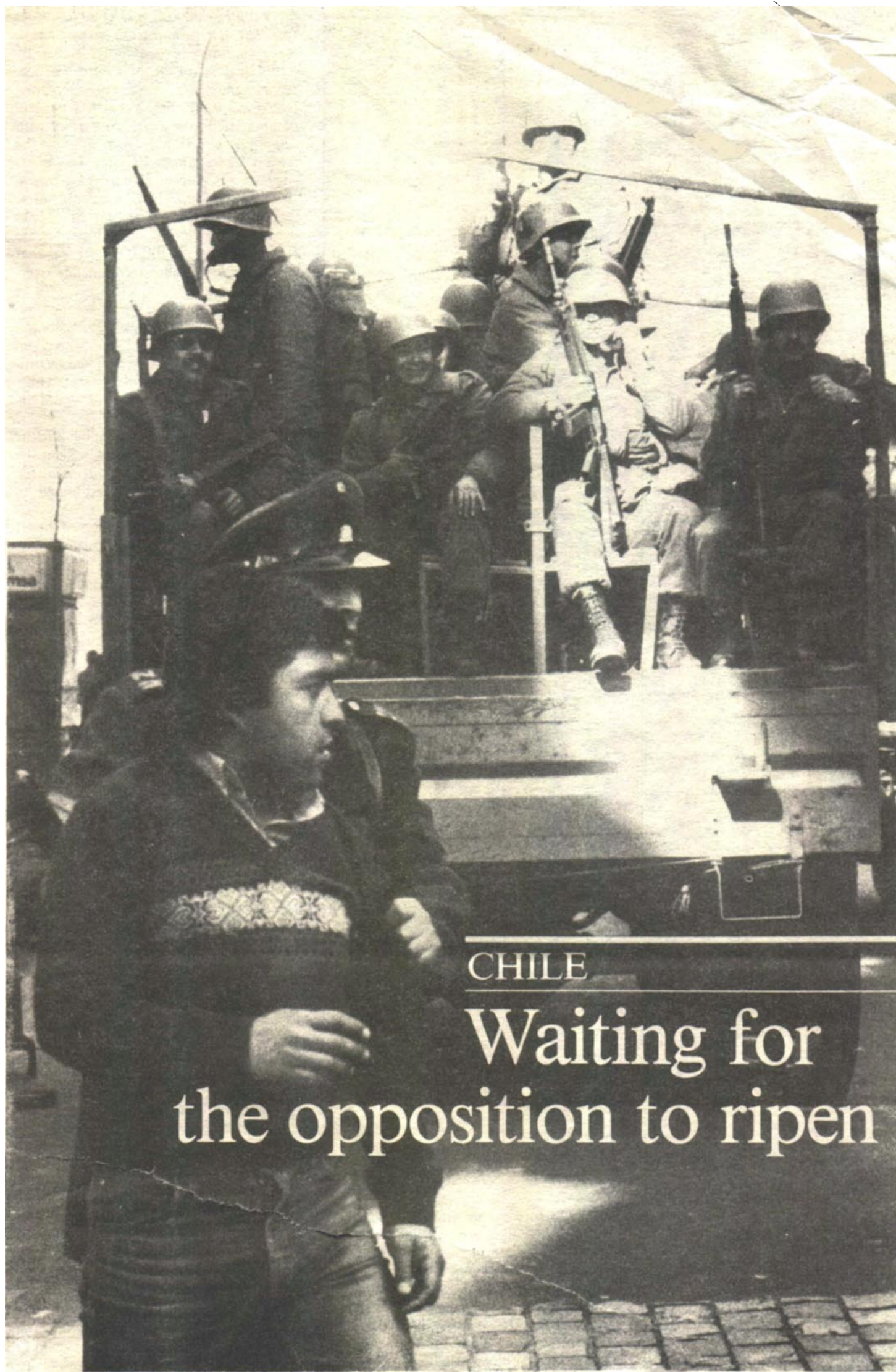
Like their neighbors to the south, Michigan consumers may soon be asked by their utilities to submit to new rate increases in an effort to recover costs of unwise investments. But unlike Illinois, Indiana and Ohio, Michigan currently has no coherent legal standards governing its utilities. Decisions on crucial energy issues and rate regulation are made on a case-by-case basis by the state's Public Utilities Commission and this leaves ratepayers extremely vulnerable.

The Michigan Citizen's Lobby (MCL) has proposed an amendment to the state constitution that allows for reallocation of service territory, mandates "wheeling" (transporting power from one utility to the domain of another) and, most important, in view of the almost inevitable cancellation of Midland, it prohibits utilities from charging users for plants not generating electricity—whether they are under construction or abandoned.

A statewide petition drive currently underway must gather 304,001 signatures—10 percent of those who voted in the last gubernatorial election—in order to put this legislation on the November ballot. Its supporters say that while they expect to see a strong campaign mounted by the utilities against the proposed legislation, it is likely to pass.

For Michigan, which is tentatively recovering from a deeper recession than almost anywhere else in the country, this legislation carries particular importance. With industrial electricity rates already 30 percent higher than the regional average, Michigan can't afford to further discourage industry from locating there, and if rates climb much higher, existing industry may even be driven out. While unemployment is sticking at 11 percent, Tuchinsky warns that ruthless rate hikes would seriously undermine the current economic recovery, and could push that figure back up.





## CHILE Waiting for the opposition to ripen

Police arrest youth during August '83 Day of National Protest in Santiago.

By Tim Frasca

### SANTIAGO, CHILE

CHILE PRESENTLY HAS ALL the ingredients necessary for a full-scale rebellion against 10 years of military dictatorship. But, as one former parliamentarian from the Radical Party put it, "The fruit is not yet ripe." The heady expectations of the protest movement's August and September peaks have given way to a sober examination of exactly how this stubborn and resourceful regime can be dislodged. Chileans have stopped speculating on when and are asking if an overthrow is possible.

The protest scenes witnessed by hundreds of journalists in town for the 10th anniversary of Gen. Augusto Pinochet's September 1973 takeover—the clashes with police, the bonfires and barricades spreading for hundreds of blocks through Santiago's slum neighborhoods—left the impression of a regime tottering on the brink. Civilian politicians began to journey around the country as if running for

the presidency in some soon-to-be announced elections. The example of Argentina, where the military was forced into a tactical retreat after its Falklands disaster, lent an air of inevitability to the majority's desire for change.

But majority will is a far cry from a majority rule. As a retired general told *In These Times*, "We have the military force. The armed forces are 100 percent behind this government." He predicted that Pinochet "will be in power until 1989." (Under the constitution ratified in 1980, Pinochet is to rule until that year, when a tightly-controlled electoral system will replace the present system.)

The realization that pot-banging and street demonstrations alone will not end military rule has sent the opposition forces into a period of examination and planning of a long-term strategy. Various forms of grassroots mobilization are being tested in the political elbow-room created by the months of protests. Party activity is surprisingly open, much of it still technically illegal, and all signs point to an attempted general strike as the next escalation of the confrontation,

sometime in March or April.

But despite the enthusiasm for following Argentina's lead, Chileans grimly realize that Chile is a different case. "Right now we are heading more toward a Cuba or a Nicaragua solution than an Argentina solution," says Government Employees Union President Hernol Flores, a Social Democrat who clearly prefers the latter.

In its war debacle, Argentina's governing military had proved itself incapable of fulfilling either the function of a government or a military. By contrast, while Pinochet is discredited by the economic disaster, Chile's armed forces, built on Prussian-style lines, are still held in some awe by Chileans, who like to remind foreigners that their country "has never lost a war."

In addition, while Peronism absorbs most radical sentiment in Argentina, the Chilean general must consider the continued strength of the Marxist left, especially the powerful Communist Party. A voluntary military exit that would set the stage for another Salvador Allende is hardly plausible. Fear of the left is also

widespread among the centrist critics of the government—a fact Pinochet has used successfully to divide the opposition.

### An early skirmish.

If Chile's workers will in fact risk their jobs in a general strike, as labor leaders believe—despite unemployment above 30 percent and widespread hunger—it reflects both the maturity of the opposition and the desperateness of the situation. "We have a responsibility to explain to our people that they can't expect quick and easy gains," says Hernan Camun, head of the unrecognized union of Santiago's 235,000 government workfare employees. "But in general, they know what they're getting into, and they're ready."

Camun's ranks were the first to test the waters of the post-September climate in a massive face-off with their employer—the regime. During November and December thousands of laborers in the government-funded PEM (Minimum Employment) and POJH (Public Works for Heads of Household) projects assembled to demand increases in their sub-survival stipends of \$25 to \$45 a month. They staged marches on Santiago's various municipal headquarters and struck their largely irrelevant make-work projects for a day or two.

The regime responded with its usual iron fist. Santiago's military governor announced that all PEM and some POJH projects would be terminated as "unproductive," throwing more than 60,000 people back to "pure" unemployment. The canceled works corresponded, of course, to the localities that had staged the most militant protests. All of La Granja's projects were eliminated. "Now we have gardens, people eat greens," says Olga, head of a two-year-old soup kitchen in one hard-hit neighborhood. "But in the winter, the hunger will be terrible."

On the surface, it appeared that the government had won the round—it gave no concessions and discouraged further upheavals with its punitive response. But the price was a deepening of the social crisis. "At 4,000 pesos (\$45) a month, we had nothing to lose," said 28-year-old Jimena at the POJH rally in the western district of the capital. "Now we have even less."

### Party politics.

In September "dialogue" was the rage. But currently, participants in the aborted series of meetings between approved moderate politicians and Gen. Pinochet's cabinet chief, Sergio Onofre Jarpa, are silent about the subject. Jarpa met three times with leaders of the Democratic Alliance (AD), composed of Radicals, Social Democrats, a Socialist or two, Nationalists and assorted rightists, but dominated by the Christian Democrats (DC). The government strongly insisted that the Communist Party (PC) be excluded and harped on this theme repeatedly, demanding at one point that the Alliance "define itself" vis-a-vis Communist participation in the body and its public acts. Alliance figures dutifully distanced themselves from the PC, thus fueling the government's red-baiting campaign.

With the dialogue, the Pinochet regime managed to get through the difficult August-September period of mass protests and the dozens of state-provoked deaths with a veneer of flexibility. The U.S. State Department issued 14 separate statements applauding the talks. Early reports of what was actually being said in the dialogues were ominously vague. Jarpa promised nothing but more talks, while continuing to utilize the full repressive force of the state as interior minister. After one dinner session at the home of Archbishop Juan Francisco Fresno, Jarpa signed the order relegating 24 people to internal exile under the despised Article 24—one of the topics the dialoguers had pressed him on.

During the dialogue President Pinochet issued statements designed to undercut the whole process. Finally, the Alliance broke off the talks. Christian Democratic Party president Gabriel Valdes accused Pinochet of "unwillingness to arrive at a solution that will lead us to a real democracy without awaiting the present constitution's schedule."



# PERSPECTIVES

## The opposition in Iran is on the rise and it's optimistic

By Saeed Dorani

**O**NLY FIVE YEARS AFTER the 1979 revolution in Iran, the Khomeini regime is facing a resistance movement that believes the regime's days are numbered.

This optimism on the part of the opposition is based on the existence of a ruined economy, an unpopular war, fierce competition among ruling factions, murderous suppression of dissidents and the steady growth of opposition. The Iran-Iraq war has already been accompanied by 50 percent unemployment, a 400 percent inflation rate, shortages and rationing of most commodities and three million refugees. Conflicts among leaders of Khomeini's state apparatus are growing. Resignations, purges and public attacks are daily occurrences. On occasion, Khomeini himself has had to step in and dismiss or reshuffle officials in order to get the government to function.

Above all, what appears to be the only viable democratic alternative to the Khomeini regime—the National Council of Resistance—and its principal constituent member—the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran—are organizing the growing Resistance. In a country where 11-year-old children caught with anti-government leaflets are subjected to torture and execution (as reported recently by Amnesty International), the messages and pictures of Massoud Rajavi, chairman of the National Council of Resistance and leader of the People's Mojahedin, continue to be widely distributed and displayed.

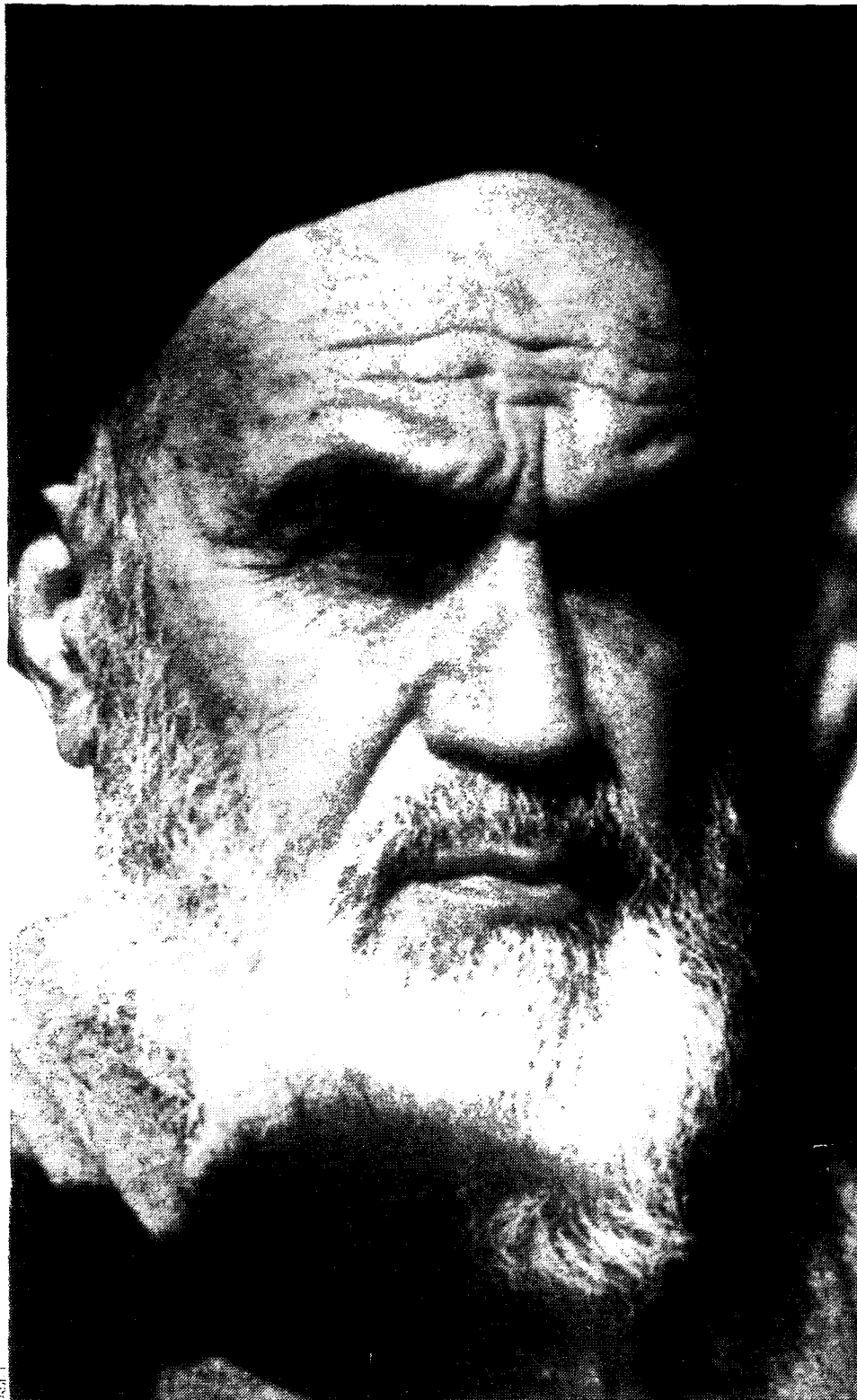
Despite severe repression and the round the clock presence of more than 5,000 bullet-proof patrol cars in the streets of Tehran, news of resistance and the regime's savagery spreads and secret gatherings and ceremonies to honor martyrs of the Resistance are held.

The most important of such occasions was February 8, which marked the second anniversary of the martyrdom of Commander Moussa Khiabani (Rajavi's deputy and the politico-military commander of the Mojahedin inside Iran), Ashraf Rabi'i (Rajavi's wife) and Azar Rezai'i (Moussa Khiabani's wife and the famous Rezai'i family's fifth martyr) as well as 17 other members of the Mojahedin.

They were slain two years ago as they fought the Pasdaran (Khomeini's guards) who had attacked their residence in Tehran.

The same evening, a shocking scene was broadcast on National Iranian Television. Lajevardi, head of Tehran's Evin Prison, held in his arms Mostafa, the in-

*A democratic alternative to the Khomeini regime exists in the National Council of Resistance, led by the people's Mojahedin.*



Conflicts in Khomeini's Iran are growing as conditions in the country deteriorate.

fant son of Massoud Rajavi as he stood by the bodies of Ashraf Rabi'i (the baby's mother), Moussa Khiabani and other slain Mojahedin.

Throughout Iran people watched outraged at the blood-stained corpses and the one-year-old Mostafa crying in the arms of Khomeini's infamous torturer.

The bodies were also taken to the Evin Prison and displayed before the prisoners to break their morale. But the prisoners defied Lajevardi's order to desecrate the bodies. Instead, they saluted Commander Moussa. One prisoner stepped forward and spat on Lajevardi's face. On Lajevardi's order, 300 imprisoned Mojahedin were executed the same night.

Commander Moussa Khiabani and Mojahed Ashraf Rabi'i had previously been jailed for many years by the Shah and were freed by the people during the 1979 revolution. Their heroic resistance and the events following their martyrdom had a profound impact on the Iranian people. The vivid contrast between Khomeini's rascality and Mojahedin's self-sacrifice greatly increased popular sympathy with the Resistance. It turned February 8 into a national day to remember the more than 30,000 martyrs of the past two and a half years of resistance.

At the time of his martyrdom, "Moussa," 33, was one of the most brilliant figures of the Iranian revolution. His 15

years of struggle in the ranks of the Mojahedin and resistance against torture during seven years of captivity in the Shah's jails, his role in liberating the city of Tabriz during the final days of the Shah and his numerous lectures and speeches, particularly as a parliamentary candidate, had made Moussa Khiabani an unforgettable hero against the dictatorships of both the Shah and Khomeini. Ashraf Rabi'i had spent 10 years of her

life in struggle against the regimes of the Shah and Khomeini, enduring enormous torture in the Shah's jails. After the 1979 uprising, she lectured frequently on the objectives of the revolution. Being the most prominent woman member of the Mojahedin, she was regarded as the symbol of revolutionary Mojahed women.

Last year, people throughout Iran secretly commemorated the first anniversary of February 8th. Ceremonies were also held this year to mark the occasion. Iranians abroad organized various activities to publicize February 8 as a national symbol of the determination of the Resistance to "pay any price for freedom." Demonstrations were held in major Asian, European and American cities (Los Angeles, Montreal and New York) by the Moslem Iranian Students Societies (supporters of the Mojahedin) to promote a distinction between the Khomeini regime and the majority of the Iranian people and introduce the popular Iranian Resistance.

Many personalities and parties around the world have supported the struggle for democracy and social progress in Iran led by the Mojahedin. Among them are the Socialist Party of France, the Socialist Party of Italy, the British Labour Party. In Chicago, Professor Lee Anderson, chair of the Northwestern University Political Science Department, in a January 18 letter to Massoud Rajavi extended "feelings of Solidarity on the second anniversary of February 8, 1982.... That day will be remembered as a historic day in the endeavors of the Iranian people to achieve freedom...."

Khomeini's urgent need to suppress his opponents stems from the strength of the Resistance and the growing peace movement against a background of the deepening economic and social crises. In the face of war as a distraction from internal problems, the opposition publicizes its strategic slogan of "Peace and Freedom." In a communique broadcast repeatedly during the week of January 8-14 on the clandestine "Voice of Mojahed" radio, the Social Section of the People's Mojahedin proclaimed it "a week for peace." Initial reports said that the Resistance units and cells concentrated on leafletting and writing slogans throughout Iran. The campaign was especially successful in Tehran, Mashhad, Tabriz, Isfahan, Rasht, Lahijan, Semnan and Hamedan.

Despite the use of more than 20 security and intelligence organizations, armed patrol cars, street checkpoints and control of arterial routes into and out of cities and several other security plans, Khomeini has failed to deliver a strategic blow to the Mojahedin in the past 20 months. This is why in his recent speech he told his adherents: "We have all entered an arena in which we shall be defeated if we take one stride back." But there is not much room left for "improvements" in the severity of repression and he does not dare release any of the 100,000 political prisoners currently being held.

With continuous intensification of the crisis, all indicators point toward the collapse of the Khomeini regime. ■

Saeed Dorani was a journalist in Iran before coming to the U.S.

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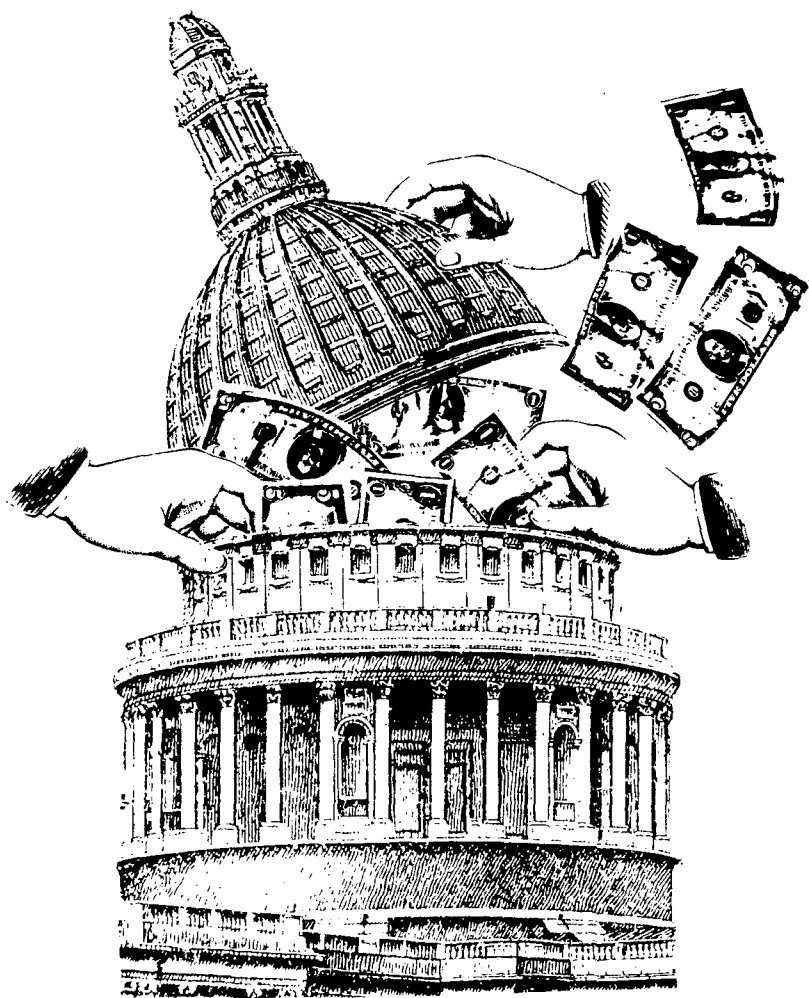
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**The Nation Thief**  
By Robert Houston  
Pantheon Books, 241 pp.,  
\$13.95

By Pat Aufderheide

Ever wonder why Latin Americans put such a vicious spin on the term "gringo," or why the Nicaraguans inserted "Yankees" into the first verse of their new national anthem? Experience, that's why.

The history of U.S. intervention in Latin America laces the sordid with the improbable. And there is no better example of it than the wacko but true story of William Walker, a diminutive Yankee journalist with megalomaniac tendencies. In the 1850s, with a ragtag army calling itself "The Immortals," he invaded Nicaragua on behalf of big U.S. money (Cornelius Vanderbilt, who had a canal in mind). He stayed to set up an empire of his own—a slave state, in fact. And he was finally run out by a coalition army from neighboring states, which was backed by big British money (they wanted what Vanderbilt wanted).

The whole thing makes *The Mosquito Coast* look like a Cook's tour.

Robert Houston's novel *The Nation Thief* renders this true, but conveniently forgotten story, in the form of an oral history. His characters are a sample drawn from the event's leading actors, some recreated more freely from life than others. (Walker wrote his own memoirs in 1860, and there are other histories as well.) Aside from Walker himself—always speaking, as he did in his memoirs, in the third person—there is a poor white soldier, a free black doctor, a white art journalist, an Indian officer in Walker's army, an American expatriate wife and a Nicaraguan prostitute.

Houston is not new to the task of drawing documentary-style fiction out of melodramatic fact; he wrote *Bisbee '17* about a 1917 Wobblly strike. As our grip on history—our own, let alone ours in relation to other nations'—loosens with every new TV docudrama, such an enterprise is laudable. Well done, it can restore a sense that these long ago and far away events were executed by people as real as you and me. Moreover, it can explain the very different motivations these people had from you and me, including in that most difficult of areas—the ways in which they were living out romance and ideals of their era, not the "mandate of necessity" that charms vulgar Marxists as much as it does supply-siders.

If what you want out of *The Nation Thief* is to be told a vivid bit of history, then this is an excellent book. It would, for instance, be a choice addition to a college course reading list. If what you want out of this literary exercise is some insight into the underlying problem—of how it is we can so grossly misperceive our own role as imperialists in the area of the world Reagan is pleased to term "our back yard"—then this is a good, an adequate book. But if what you want is an engrossing, innovative piece of fiction, then *The Nation Thief* isn't even under consideration.

For one, the oral history format comes with the liabilities of non-fiction oral histories. The narrators don't always answer the questions you would like to ask, and they do deliver mono-

logues. Where you would be patient with a living real-life voice, you tend to fidget with fictional characters. The author doesn't convince us that these people are all different, either. Most of them share disconcerting oddities of speech, particularly a tendency to go for the gaudy

metaphor. More crucial is the fact that Houston doesn't convince us these are authentic voices of the era. The language—again with the jarring exception of the quaint turn of phrase—sounds too modern, as do some of the social attitudes, such as the doctor's professional

*This fictional oral history tells the story of one man's invasion of Nicaragua in the 1850s.*

position. (Before modern drugs and high-tech equipment, the doctor's social status wasn't endowed with that saintly science aura.) Also unconvincing is the personal psychology of some of

were allowed to choose between submission or an invitation to a necktie party.

Each man gives a fully plausible motive for shooting Fix's son. One such account is given by a retired farmworker as he looks out at the unmarked graves of his parents and grandparents on land that may soon be cleared for sugarcane cultivation:

"I did it cause that tractor is getting closer and closer to that graveyard, and I was scared if I didn't do it, one day that tractor was go'n come in there and plow up them graves, getting rid of all proof that black people ever farmed this land with plows and mules—like if they had nothing from the starten but power machines. Sure, one day they will get rid of the proof that we ever was, but they ain't go'n do it while I'm still here....I'm the last one left. I had to see that the graves stayed for a little while longer."

The local whites who also inhabit Gaines' finely crafted landscape tell their own history as they react to the murder. Candy, who inherited the plantation as a child, was brought up by Mathu, the chief suspect. She adds a stiff dose of traditional paternalism to her compassion when she tells the sheriff that she will defend the black workers on the Marshall plantation from the Cajuns who seek to avenge the murder of one of their own. "Before I let them harm my people, I'll stand alone," she says. When the Cajuns discuss the murder and the likelihood of revenge they make no secret of the contempt other whites—liberals like Candy—have for them. But most importantly, the whites of the once-feudal area are far from emblems of unmitigated evil.

By the time the identity of the killer is determined—and those who read this riveting book have every right to discover that for

IN THESE TIMES FEB. 15-21, 1984 13  
the characters, particularly the women—the American woman, in fact, has the affect of a conscientious upper-middle-class college girl in the '50s.

But if these oral histories don't sweep you back into the 19th century—whether because of limitations of the form or clumsiness of execution—the social psychology of this miniaturized imperialism is convincing. Oral history makes that easy, letting the characters just lay out what was in it for them. Importantly, what's explained is not the big-money, big-politics interests (they are easy to grasp, and well known), but the motivations of the followers, the rank-and-file, people who did the dirty work.

Given the misery of opportunity in the U.S., for instance, the free black doctor finds that a job in a racist invaders' army looks good—not for the money, but for the respect. To a cracker born to hopelessness, the glory of being an "Immortal" has an irresistible allure. To the Indian officer, no loyalty is so strong as is his hatred of the corrupt Latino leaders of Central American society. And the dreamy artist is swept along by destiny—what would be called, in a later generation, manifest destiny.

"You have to understand, gentlemen," he says, "that everything was possible in those days...The world was endless; if you were an American and had the future on your side, the world was waiting for you, praying for you."

Some people still believe it. ■

themselves—Gaines has assembled a vivid fictional history of this tiny corner of rural Louisiana. He presents a powerful portrait deeply rooted in the age-old pattern of everyday life and the lyricism of daily speech.

But *A Gathering of Old Men* is far more than a superb example of realistic "regional" writing (if that demeaning category must be invoked). It's also the story of a struggle for simple recognition against the barriers of poverty, political exclusion and a community's shared fatalism. The feeble old men who fight this struggle one afternoon learn in the course of their invocations of the past that talking about their own history is the first step toward making it. ■

David D'Arcy reviews books for WBAI radio in New York.

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INPRINT

FICTION

## Delusions and destiny



## Old Men: Many motives, one murder

**A Gathering of Old Men**  
By Ernest J. Gaines  
Knopf, 214 pp., \$13.95

By David D'Arcy

Ernest J. Gaines, author of *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*, has been something of a William Faulkner of the black South. St. Raphael parish northwest of Baton Rouge is his Yoknapatawpha County, and the Faulknerian voices that narrate his novels ring with the rhythms, humor and history of this rural area. The young have all departed in search of jobs, leaving the very old and a few children on the land where grievances and bonds of affection have endured among the parish's blacks, English-speaking whites and Cajuns for generations.

Land is the source of the many grievances. An old black man explains this as he sets the scene for the complicated events of *A Gathering of Old Men*, Gaines' dramatic new novel. "We had not the worst land from the start, and no matter how hard we worked it, the people with the best land was go'n always be in front. All you old people know this already. After the plantation was dying out, the Marshall's dosed out the land for sharecropping, giving the best land to the Cajuns, and giving us the worst—that botomland near the swamps. Here,

our own black people had been working this land 100 years for the Marshall plantation, but when it came to sharecropping, now they gave the best land to the Cajuns, who had never set food on the land before."

There has been a murder in the black quarters of the vast Marshall plantation. The victim is Beau Boutan, a Cajun farmer and the son of the feared segregationist parish boss, Fix Boutan. Beau had been leasing land from Candy Marshall, the headstrong, liberal young white landowner. By all appearances, the killer is Mathu, an 80-year-old black farmworker with a history of rebelliousness that has always set him apart from the other black workers. Candy, however, claims that she has killed Beau, and she summons the entire older generation of black men from around the countryside to hear her confession. The men, all in their 70s, arrive with shotguns and spent shells, each of them claiming to be the murderer. When the local sheriff—known for violent interrogations—shows up, the scene is set for each of the self-proclaimed killers to confess.

In a series of speeches—some of near-operatic power—each of these old men tells the small crowd assembled at the quarters of his own experiences under the domination of Fix Boutan. Arbitrary violence was a way of life, and black men who resisted



By Richard Pena

The links between the United States and Cuba often are severely strained in global politics, but to someone interested in movies, the Cuban cinema nevertheless stands as one of the most consistently interesting areas of filmmaking in the world.

American critics had a chance to sample this exciting film community in December as delegates to the fifth International Festival of New Latin American Cinema in Havana.

Before the Revolution of 1959, there was little filmmaking of any consequence in Cuba. Today, the Cuban cinema is booming and praised in international circles.

By way of proof, the lobby of the Cine Charlie Chaplin—the cinemathèque named after Cuba's favorite film star and the place where many of the festival screenings were held—is crammed with cases displaying Cuba's numerous international film awards, including a gold Hugo from the 1978 Chicago International Film Festival for Tomas Gutierrez Alea's *The Last Supper*.

Moviegoing is very much a part of Cuban life, and there's a wide, international selection of films from which to select, including, occasionally, Hollywood blockbusters. Both *Godfather* films were huge hits, as was *Jaws*; recently, *E.T.* was shown on television, dubbed in Spanish, and was well received. The old Hollywood classics, including Chaplin comedies, remain popular.

Even Cuba's staunchest critics will admit to its explosion in the arts since the Revolution. Newspapers are filled with listings for concerts, plays, ballets and, of course, movies. Posters announcing upcoming events, promoting proper dental care and reminding people that "Obesity is Counter-revolutionary" adorn walls throughout the city.

## Cuban cinema is praised in international circles.

The cinematic component of this cultural activity is ICAIC—the *Instituto Cubano del Arte y Industria Cinematografica*—a government agency handling all phases of film activity, from processing labs to film production to exhibition circuits to education of apprentices in the field.

Created by governmental decree on March 24, 1959, barely three months after Fidel Castro's victory, ICAIC now produces about eight features a year, along with approximately 40 documentaries and animated shorts and weekly newsreels. Some films also are made for television and the Cuban Army film studios. (One of the best films I saw at the festival was a documentary on Cuban veterans of the Spanish Civil War, made for the Army studios.)

In the course of the 10 days of this year's festival, easily 600 films, ranging from several minutes to a few hours long, were screened in as many as eight locations. The sheer quantity of films was perhaps the most eloquent statement of the impor-



## FILM

# Cuba's festival promotes ties

tance of Latin American filmmaking in world cinema today. Foreign delegates—drawn from filmmakers, critics, producers and exhibitors—to the festival numbered more than 500, the lion's share arriving from Latin American nations, although significant contingents came from Europe and (this year) the United States.

The festival has two major divisions: The festival "proper," with sessions (each lasting about four hours and consisting of shorts and features) scheduled three times daily at the Charlie Chaplin; and the MECLA (*Mercado de Cine Latinoamericano*, Latin American Film Market) screenings, presented inside the ICAIC building next door to the Chaplin. Several Havana movie theaters also presented festival programs, and the ninth floor of ICAIC was transformed into a "video lounge" for a host of other works.

"The Other Face: Films by U.S. Independents" offered viewers a chance to see works such as *The Atomic Cafe*, *Rosie the Riveter* and *Northern Lights*.

Films from every Latin American nation—including works from Colombia and Brazil, nations not having diplomatic relations with Cuba—are eligible for the Festival, along with films by non-Latins about Latin American subjects. Everything from clandestinely filmed reports on armed resistance in Chile to predictably silly sex comedies found its way to the screen, but the jury of leading Latin American filmmakers and critics awarded the festival's grand prize to *Up to a Certain Point* by the Cuban director Gutierrez Alea.

*Up to a Certain Point* follows the troubled romance between a female dockworker and a screenwriter who is creating a script based on her life. The lingering presence of machismo in post-Revolutionary society has been discussed frequently in the Cuban cinema; *Up to a Certain Point* adds a dimension of social class difference to that discussion. A coolly intelligent, engaging work, marred by an abrupt and unresolved conclusion, the film confirms Gutierrez Alea as one of the most interesting filmmakers working anywhere.

Reactions to two other Cuban premieres were mixed. Billed as "the first Cuban musical," Manuel Octavio Gomez's *Patakin* is a brash, often outrageous parable that blends liberal doses of Afro-Cuban mythology, tropical cabaret and Hollywood musicals from the '50s. Although there are several delightful production numbers, as well as hilarious swipes at Cuban bureaucracy, *Patakin* eventually falls apart, a victim of its own

energetic but aimless pacing. It will be interesting to see how U.S. audiences—especially Hispanics—will receive this film.

Humberto Solas' *Amada* was close to perfect cinematically, yet the least interesting of the three Cuban features. Exquisitely photographed, with an attention to atmosphere and period detail that rivals the best of the Italian director Luchino Visconti, *Amada*'s tale of a woman from a formerly wealthy family trapped in a loveless marriage to an unscrupulous politician was little more than an artfully assembled exercise for its talented director.

Winner of the Best Non-Latin American Film award was the American documentary on Guatemala, *When the Mountains Tremble*, currently a hit on the international festival circuit.

Critical reaction to the films featured in "The Other Face: Films by U.S. Independents" was overwhelmingly positive, though attendance was disappointing. The biggest problem was location; the films were scheduled at a theater a mile from the Chaplin-ICAIC complex. Still, the contacts made and the heightened awareness of the U.S. independent cinema by Latin Americans (and vice versa) will no doubt prove valuable. During a two-day seminar organized by ICAIC, Latin Americans were amazed to discover that the experiences of this group of American filmmakers paralleled their own, in terms of prob-

*PATAKIN*, billed as "the first Cuban musical," got mixed reviews.

lems with financing, distribution and exhibition.

The exhilaration of the film festival was climaxed by a reception at the Palace of the Revolution, where delegates were able to meet and briefly speak with Castro himself.

He was larger than I had expected, powerfully built with soft, deep-set eyes, and he mingled freely with the crowd.

So, what does one ask Castro in a brief conversation? Well, J. Hoberman, a film critic for the *Village Voice*, asked why the Cubans—baseball fanatics that they are—use the designated hitter rule in their games, to which Castro eloquently and at length cited arguments in favor of the rule and the fact that designated hitters are used in international baseball competition. Cubans, he explained, are internationalists and respect international rules in sports.

It was a small but magical moment, and it made me hope all the more that relations between our two nations will someday again be friendly so that more Americans will have the chance to experience this dynamic, fascinating society.

**Richard Pena**, director of the Film Center at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, reviews film for the *Chicago Tribune*, where a version of this article first appeared.

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### CHICAGO, IL

#### February 23

Frances Fox Piven, author of *The New Class War* and *Regulating the*

Poor, former leader, National Welfare Rights Organization, and spokesperson for national voter registration drive, will speak on "A Movement Strategy for the '84 Elections." At Cross Currents (second floor), 3206 N. Wilton, at 7:30 p.m. Free childcare. \$2 donation requested. Sponsored by DSA. Reception will follow.

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# Hynde

Continued from page 16  
man-Scott who died of drug-related causes. After a six-month silence, Hynde and Chambers released "Back on the Chain Gang"/"My City Was Gone." Dedicated to Honeyman-Scott, "Back on the Chain Gang" was an elegiac remembrance. But it also made clear, in the "huhs" of exertion that filled the background in homage to Sam Cooke's "Chain Gang," that the surviving Pretenders had hard work ahead of them.

And with *Learning to Crawl*, Hynde is starting again. The album's opening track and Top 25 hit, "Middle of the Road," picks up where "Louie Louie" left us; it's a crashing, trash-riff rave-up, with an elastic melody line that meshes "La Bamba," "All Day and All of the Night," and Steve Miller's "Living in the

USA." But whereas "Louie Louie" celebrated Hynde's initiation into rock's circle of immortals (with its promises of eternal youth, eternal good times, eternal sensuality), "Middle of the Road" and much of the album expose the fallacy of those promises.

Hynde was once as infatuated with rock's nonchalant, death-defying impudence as any fan, but it's easy to imagine her terror in discovering that, at the age of 33, she has outlived half her male band.

First, she gets angry ("Middle of the Road") deriding punk (and rock and roll in general) for failing to make good on its boast of changing the world. She's in the middle of her life, and she's leaving the hedonistic past behind ("I'm not the kind I used to be/I got a kid/I'm 33") and challenging her followers and peers to grow up as well. And then, she goes home. "Middle of the Road" deals in political specifics, American specifics

("When you own a big chunk of the bloody Third World, the babies just come with the scenery"); like a street urchin itching for a fight ("Come on out in the middle of the road"), Hynde taunts the middle-class complacency, middle-American insularity, and MOR/new wave apathy that overrun her home.

On "My City Was Gone," she describes her return to Akron as akin to awakening from a coma, the pace of numbing alterations ("My family was gone," "My pretty countryside was paved down the middle") throbbing in Tony Butler's swampy bass. And finally, she takes keen notice of the passing days. "Nobody's permanent/Everything's on loan here," she acknowledges on "Time the Avenger," gently satirizing the futility of trying to "paralyze that tiny little tick-tick-tick" with booze and sex and stardom.

In ancient symmetry, *Learning to Crawl* counters death with birth; it's motherhood, of

course, that has forced Hynde to think again about what matters to her, from the sound of the band to the shape of her career. *Learning to Crawl* is largely about leaving the known pleasures and hardships of one kind of life for the uncertainties of another. As a woman rocker with a child, she refuses to settle for the commonplace that, for women anyway, rock and roll and a family don't mix. They have to mix—so she mixes them. On "Thumbelina," which chugs and twangs like a melange of every Johnny Cash song (Hynde caps each verse with a zesty rockabilly whoop), mother and daughter hit the road for one of mom's tours. Hynde points out the varied charms of the landscape ("We left the snowstorms and the thunder and rain/For the desert sun/We're gonna be born again"). And in preparing her daughter for the separations that will come from having the Kinks' Ray Davies as a father and Chrissie Hynde as a

IN THESE TIMES FEB. 15-21, 1984 15  
mother, she fortifies herself against the "frozen and silent nights" that she pictures on "2000 Miles," repeating, "He'll be back at Christmastime"—as if mentioning the holiday could instantly restore her family.

Hynde forsakes the curdling brittleness of her old sex songs, singing here with a ripe sweetness. She's singing for her life, a life that isn't so solitary, so self-centered, anymore. The question Hynde asks on *Learning to Crawl* is not whether rock can age gracefully but whether it can age at all; the challenge she throws down before rock performers is to convince another generation hoping to die before it gets old that the future is as seductive as the present. And, as all mothers do, Hynde weaves her story with a moral: we cross the middle of the road only on our way to the other side. ■

Joyce Millman is regular contributor to the *Boston Phoenix*, where a longer version of this article appeared.

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By Joyce Millman

## Real rock stars don't have babies. But don't tell Chrissie Hynde.

**T**HE PRETENDERS' appearance at the 1983 U.S. Festival was the band's first concert since the deaths of two of its founding members, guitarist James Honeyman-Scott and bassist Pete Farndon. But the MTV VJ who collared leader Chrissie Hynde, drummer Martin Chambers, new guitarist Robbie McIntosh, and new bassist Malcolm Foster for a backstage interview didn't want to talk about any downers. Nobody ever dies for real in MTV-land. Hynde had given birth to a daughter four months earlier and gosh, here she was, ready to, you know, rock out, so he sidled up to her and popped the question that's probably plagued his nightmares since: had she written any new songs about being a mother? Hynde drew her cheeks in lemon-sucking tight and snapped, "All of my songs are about being a mother."

Hynde has indeed written motherhood into the center of the Pretenders' long-awaited third album, *Learning to Crawl* (Sire). Although numerous pop,

country, and folk singers have addressed giving birth and child rearing, Hynde is the one female rock performer who has written obsessively about these subjects. But on *Learning to Crawl*, she doesn't merely sketch a few motherly mysteries about the wonders of birth. Spurred not only by having created one life but by having witnessed the waste of two others, Hynde rebuts the rock bromide that its players (and fans) must live fast and die young.

With a dogmatism befitting a former critic, Hynde has always wanted to shape rock and roll to her own vision, simply because she believed that her aim was truer. As a rock fan, Hynde wouldn't settle for dreams of being another girl singer, an appendage in the almost exclusively male rock world. She was a disciple of the Who, the Stones, the Clash, but she didn't envy the low-slung, swaggering guitar heroes their maleness—it was their carte blanche she coveted. As an American go-getter in London (where she wrote for *New Musical Express*), Hynde

was captivated by the British punk scene's brash populism: anyone could sing, anyone could play in a band, anyone could become an event, regardless of gender, class, or talent. But she had no interest in joining separate-but-equal female groups—she went looking for musicians as professional-minded as herself.

Those musicians turned out to be male, but Hynde wouldn't settle for being one of the boys, exuding forced bravado (like, say, Janis Joplin) or empty machismo (like, say, Pat Benatar). Just as she refused to barter for rock autonomy with her sexual identity, she scrupulously refused to trade on her looks, hiding behind nose-length bangs and her buttoned-up fop-in-blue-jeans costume on stage. Still, *Pretenders* (1980) was one of rock's steamiest sexual manifestos. At times, it seemed as if Hynde were being militantly female to make up for the one-sidedness of most of rock's sex talk (and when she snipped, "Thank you, girls," after every song of the Pretenders' first Boston concert, she was cleverly, cruelly, showing the men in the

audience how it feels to be excluded from the music you love).

Hynde's shock tactics established her punk credentials. But she didn't swallow punk's anti-traditionalism whole.

She dug back into rock's past (ever the dutiful rock critic) and dusted off the girl-group fables she'd admired: the girl trying to get a guy's attention, the girl babying her boyfriend, trying to get him to the altar by emulating his mother. But Hynde underlined the independence latent in the first situation (in "Brass in Pocket," she thought she was pretty special, even if "he" didn't know she existed). "Kid," "Lovers of Today," "The Wait," and her version of Ray Davies' "Stop Your Sobbing" glistened with maternal tenderness, her throaty voice flicking from huskiness to fluidity, from silken purrs to half-swallowed sobs, from Mae West harrumphs

to dusky quavers.

On *Pretenders II* (1981), the pressure of meeting the expectations raised by the first album and the band's sudden fame (and all its temptations) upset the group's balance.

Only "Louie Louie," which closed the album like a trashy afterthought, found the band as confident, as comradely, as it was on its debut. Quoting from "In the Midnight Hour," "Woolly Bully," "All the Young Dudes," and the song it was named after, "Louie Louie" could have been Hynde's autobiography. She recreated the allure of hearing those numbers for the first time, and when she sashayed off with the title character, the song became Hynde's giddy moment of triumph—the rock-and-roll-crazy girl crashing rock and roll's inner sanctum.

"Louie Louie" turned out to be the band's epitaph. In June of 1982, Pete Farndon was fired from the group; his drug addiction had made him too unreliable, according to Hynde. But two days later, it was Honey-

Continued on page 15